

REMARKS

This responds to the office action of 15 December 2006 in which claims 1-20 were pending; all claims were examined; claims 1-11 were allowed; and claims 12-20 were rejected. Independent method claim 12 was rejected with the examiner asserting that "the method claim consists of only one step which still reads on the prior arts." The examiner further stated "The other parts of the claim contain only functional language which holds very little weight in the claim". The examiner helpfully suggested that independent claim 12 be revised to incorporate "the functional language components into steps to put the claim into condition for allowance". Having rejected independent method claim 12 in this manner, the examiner rejected method claims 12-20 under 35 U.S.C.103 (a) as unpatentable over the Jansen et al. US Patent Application 2003/0157929 in view of Cook et al. US 5,798,684.

This amendment revises claims 3, 11, 12 and 18. The revisions to dependent method claims 3, 11 and 18 correct minor editorial errors. Independent method claim 12 has been revised, as helpfully suggested by the examiner, to incorporate many of the functional steps into method steps. These revisions should put independent method claim 12 in condition for allowance. Claims 1, 2, 4-10, 13-17, 19, and 20 are unchanged. All claims are now believed to be in condition for allowance.

The 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) Rejections

As a result of the above discussed revisions to independent claim 12 to put it in condition for allowance, it is believed that the 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) rejection of dependent method claims 13-20 is moot since method claims 13 -20 are dependent upon allowable independent claim 12.

Even though the 35 U.S.C.103 (a) rejection of dependent method claims 13-20 is now moot, it should be noted that this rejection of these claims relies on the same grounds and prior art as contained in the final office action of 24 April 2006. These rejections were traversed by the applicant in the amendments of 20 June 2006 and 26

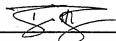
September, 2006. The applicant's comments in these amendments are hereby incorporated into the present amendment to the same extent as if fully set forth herein.

An outstanding issue, even though moot, is the merits of the 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) rejections of dependent method claims 13-20. These issues include whether the rejection was based upon 20/20 hindsight with the examiner impermissibly using knowledge gained from a reading of the applicant's invention, followed by the use of this information in formulating the obviousness rejection. A second issue is whether the examiner presented sufficient evidence to establish a prima facie case of obviousness. These issues need not be resolved since the patentability of dependent method claims 13-20 is moot in view of their dependence upon allowable independent method claim 12.

The examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned if the prosecution of the application can be expedited by so doing.

Respectfully submitted,

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